

Message Text

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62/43

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20 EA-11 NASA-04

SCI-06 DRC-01 /190 W

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P R 121854Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7836

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS BYWE

CINCPAC

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y -- PARA TWO --

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: DECONTROL UPON RECEIPT

TAGS: XO, MOPS, IN, US

SUBJECT: PALSIAMENTARS DEBATE ON INDIAN OCEAN TASK FORCE

SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER SWARAN SINGH EXPRESSED CONCERN

AT "ANY ESCALATION OF A MAJOR NAVAL POWER'S PRESENCE IN

THE INDIAN OCEAN" IN RESPONDING TO A PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON

HANCOCK TASK FORCE. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE FLEET WAS NOT

DIRECTED AGAINST INDIA. INDIA DID NOT PLAN TO PROTEST OR

CONSULT PARTICULARLY WITH LITTORAL COUNTRIES AND THE ARAB

STATES. MRS. GANDHI CONCLUDED THE DEBATE BY SAYING INDIA

COULD NOT STOP ANY COUNTRY FROM SENDING ITS SHIPS INTO THE

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INDIAN OCEAN. OUR ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER

AND PRIME MINISTER'S HANDLING OF THE ISSUE CONTINUES TO BE EXTREMELY RESTRAINED AND STANDS IN MARKED CONTRAST TO WHAT WE WOULD HAVE EXPECTED HAD THIS HAPPENED A YEAR AGO.
END SUMMARY.

1. A CALLING ATTENTION NOTICE SPONSORED BY ONE CONGRESS AND FOUR OPPSITION MEMBERS RESULTED IN OUR HOUR-ONG DEBATE IN THE LOK SABHA (LOWER HOUSE) NOVEMBER 12 ON "THE REPORTED PRESENCE OF THE US NAVAL FLEET IN THE INDIAN OCEAN." SWARAN SINGH REPLIED WITH A PREPARED STATEMENT WHICH SUMMARIZED CLAIMED US JUSTIFICATIONS OF THE FLEET MOVEMENT, REITERATED INDIAN DESIRE THAT THE AREA REMAIN "FREE FROM BIG POWER RIVALRY," NOTED UNGA INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE RESOLUTION, AND CONCLUDED THAT INDIANS "NATURALLY CONCERNED AT ANY ESCALATION OF A MAJOR NAVAL POWERS PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN." (FULL TEXT AT END OF MESSAGE).

2. QUESTIONERS RECALLED THE ENTRY OF THE ENTERPRISE INTO THE INDIAN OCEAN IN 1971. THEY WANTED THE GOI TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE HANCOCK TASK FORCE. SWARAN SINGH NOTED THAT THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE PROPOSAL HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT THE LUSAKA NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE AND THEN IN THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. EFFORTS WERE UNDERWAY IN THE UN TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSAL, ALTHOUGH THE RESPONSE FROM THE US, THE UK, FRANCE AND THE USSR HAD NOT BEEN ENCOURAGING. HE REJECTED PROPOSALS THAT INDIA CONVENE A CONFERENCE OF LITTORAL STATES OR CONSULT WITH THE ARAB STATES ABOUT THE FLEET PRESENCE. NOR WOULD INDIA PROTEST TO THE US. HIS PUBLIC STATEMENT NOVEMBER 1 AND THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE WOULD SERVE TO MAKE INDIA'S VIEWS KNOWN TO THE US AND TO THE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES.

3. SWARAN SINGH ADDED THAT INDIA HAD RAISED THE FLEET MOVE-MENT WITH THE USG AND HAD BEEN TOLD THAT IT WAS NOT DIRECTED AGAINST INDIA. HE DREW MEMBERS' ATTENTION TO THE FAILURE OF THE FLEET TO ENTER EITHER THE BAY OF BENGAL OR INDIAN TERRITORIAL WATERS OR EVEN TO COME PARTICULARLY CLOSE TO INDIA. HE EMPHASIZED THE SIZE OF THE INDIAN OCEAN. PRIME MINISTER IINDIRA GANDHI, WHO CAME IN DURING THE DEBATE, WOUND IT UP BY CORRECTING A MEMBER WHO HAD MISQUOTED AN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EARLIER STATEMENT OF HERS. SHE MAINTAINED THAT SHE HAD SAID THAT INDIA COULD NOT STOP ANY COUNTRY FROM SENDING IT SHIPS INTO THE INDIAN OCEAN.

4. ONE MEMBER QUOTED AT LENGTH A FRONT PAGE ARTICLE IN THE RADICAL WEEKLY BLITZ WHICH CHARGED THAT THE "NUCLEAR ARMORY" AT DIEGO GARCIA HAD BEEN REINFORCE WITH "SOPHISTICATED WAR PLANES, LONG-RANGE DELIVERY VEHICLES

FOR ITS NUCLEAR WARHEADS AND AN UNDISCLOSED NUMBER OF SERVICEMEN." SWARAN SINGH REPLIED ONLY THAT HE HAD PREVIOUSLY REPORTED THE COMMISSIONING OF DIEGO GARCIA MARCH 23, 1973. HE ADDED THAT THE US ALSO HAD A SATELLITE TRACKING STATION IN THE SEYCHELLES AND FACILITIES IN AUSTRALIA. HE DECLINED TO DISCUSS OTHER BLITZ ALLEGATIONS ABOUT "CLandestine ACTIVITIES" OF UNION CARBIDE TRAWLERS IN THE BAY OF BENGAL.

5. SWAJAN SINGH DID REMARK THAT IF THE ARAB-ISRAEL WAR WAS THE JUSTIFICATION FOR DISPATCH OF THE TASK FORCE, THEN THERE WAS NO REASON FOR IT REMAINING IN THE INDIAN OCEAN NOW THAT EGYPT AND ISRAEL HAD SIGNED A CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT. HE REFERRED TO USG JUSTIFICATIONS FOR DISPATCH OF THE TASK FORCE AS CONFLICTING AND SAID THIS BROUGHT USG CREDIBILITY INTO DOUBT.

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MRN: 1973NEW DE013091 SEGMENT NUMBER: 000002 ERROR READING TEXT INDEX FILE; TELEGRAM TEXT FOR THIS SEGMENT IS UNAVAILABLE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NAVAL FORCES, FOREIGN RELATIONS, SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: mcintyresh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973NEWDE13091
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731140/aaaabcyu.tel
Line Count: 135
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: mcintyresh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 20 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: WITHDRAWN <13-Jul-2001 by boyleja, DOCUMENT INCOMPLETE>; RELEASED <20-Aug-2001 by mcintyresh>; APPROVED <23-Aug-2001 by mcintyresh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PALSIAMENTARS DEBATE ON INDIAN OCEAN TASK FORCE SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER SWARAN SINGH EXPRESSED CONCERN
TAGS: MOPS, XO, IN, US, (GANDHI, INDIRA)
To: SECSTATE WASHDC COLOMBO LONDON ISLAMABAD DACCA BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005